REMARKS

Claims 1-20 are now pending in this application. Claims 1-5 are rejected. New claims 6-20 are added. Claims 1-5 are amended herein to clarify the invention. For the convenience of the Examiner, APPENDIX I is provided herewith having a complete set of pending claims with all amendments effected therein.

SPECIFICATION AMENDMENTS

Portions of the substitute specification are amended to place it into better form. No new matter is added. Entry of the amendments is respectfully requested.

REQUEST FOR ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF PRIORITY DOCUMENTS

Since the present application is a national stage application of a PCT application, the priority document was filed with the International Bureau. The Examiner is respectfully requested to obtain the priority document from the PCT/designated office unit in the U.S. Patent Office and acknowledge receipt thereof in the next Office Action.

CLAIM REJECTIONS UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 102(b)

Claims 1-5 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by the Shimoe reference. Applicant herein respectfully traverses these rejections.

"Anticipation requires the presence in a single prior art reference disclosure of each and every element of the claimed invention, *arranged as in the claim.*" ***Lindemann Maschinenfabrik GmbH v. American Hoist & Derrick Co.*** , 221 USPQ 481, 485 (Fed. Cir. 1984) (emphasis added). It is respectfully submitted that the cited reference is deficient with regard to the following.

The Shimoe reference does not provide a distinct middle height portion and standard height portion but instead provides a doomed configuration with grooves in the middle portion. Claim 1 is amended to recited the following feature not found in the Shimoe reference:

> said middle-height portion having opposing middle-height portion side edge steps and a constant middle-height portion thickness extending from one of said opposing middle-height portion side edge steps to another one of said opposing middle-height portion side edge steps[.]

In contrast the Shimoe reference shows a domed absorbent body which does not have a constant depth from side to side. Furthermore, the present invention includes:

> said leakage preventing grooves being provided in the area of the middle-height portion of the absorbent body with opposing side walls of said grooves being formed in said middle-height portion such that depths of said opposing side walls of said leakage preventing grooves are equal on opposing sides of said leakage preventing grooves[.]

The feature of the grooves having opposing side walls of equal depth is made possible by the constant middle-height portion thickness. Side walls of equal depth provide for better leakage prevention than the configuration of the Shimoe reference wherein, due to the curved domed configuration, the outer side wall of the grooves is shorter than the inner side wall. Thus, the amount of fluid build up in the groove prior to leakage is less.

Claim 2 further recites:

> the leakage preventing grooves are deeper than said constant middle-height portion thickness and extend into the standard-height portion of thc absorbent body.

Since the Shimoe reference does not disclose a distinct middle-height portion and a standard height portion as claimed, it surely cannot disclose that grooves extend into a standard-height portion of the absorbent body because there is no defined standard-height portion.

With regard to the folding lines of claim 4, the Examiner has misinterpreted the drawings of the Shimoe reference as showing folding lines. Instead, the line referred to by the Examiner is merely a mechanical drawing indication of an extent of width as made readily apparent by the arrows and the notation "W." This line has no bearing on the structural configuration of the Shimoe reference except to indicate the minimum distance between the grooves. Hence, it is respectfully

requested that the Examiner carefully review the representations set forth in the drawings before concluding that structural elements are shown.

In view of the above, it is respectfully submitted that claims 1-5 particularly describe and distinctly claim elements not disclosed in the cited reference. Therefore, reconsideration of the rejections of claims 1-5 and their allowance are respectfully requested.

NEW CLAIMS

New claims 6-20 are added and are submitted as patentable. Claim 6 and 14 provide a middle-height portion thickness of 1.5 to 8.0 mm. Claims 7 and 15 recite the feature that the groove depth is in the range of 0.5 to 9.0 mm. Claims 8 and 16 provide a ratio of the groove depth H to said constant standard-height portion thickness that is in the range of 0.06 to 3.3. Claims 9 and 17 provide for a groove bottom width of 0.5 to 5.0 mm.

Claims 10 and 18 recite a preferred middle-height portion thickness range of 2.0 to 4.0 mm. Claims 11 and 19 recite the feature that the groove depth is in the preferred range of 2.0 to 6.0 mm. Claims 11 and 20 provide a ratio of the groove depth H to said constant standard-height portion thickness that is in the preferred range of 0.2 to 0.8.

It is respectfully submitted that the new claims are patentable for the features noted above and notice to that effect is earnestly solicited.

REQUEST FOR EXTENSION OF TIME

Applicants respectfully request a two month extension of time for responding to the Office Action. **The fee of $490 for the extension is provided for in the charge authorization presented in the PTO Form 2038, Credit Card Payment form, provided herewith.**

If there is any discrepancy between the fee(s) due and the fee payment authorized in the Credit Card Payment Form PTO-2038 or the Form PTO-2038 is missing or fee payment via the Form PTO-2038 cannot be processed, the USPTO is hereby authorized to charge any fee(s) or fee(s) deficiency or credit any excess payment to Deposit Account No. 10-1250.

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In light of the foregoing, the application is now believed to be in proper form for allowance of all claims and notice to that effect is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,
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APPENDIX I

ALL PENDING CLAIMS WITH AMENDMENTS EFFECTED THEREIN

1. (Currently Amended) An absorbent article, comprising:

a liquid permeable front sheet;

a back sheet;

an absorbent body disposed between the liquid permeable front sheet and the back sheet, and having opposing outer absorbent body edges extending in a longitudinal direction of the absorbent body;

said absorbent body having a standard-height portion and a middle-height portion layered over said standard height portion in a thickness direction of said absorbent body, said standard-height portion being on a side of the absorbent body facing the back sheet;

said absorbent body having the middle-height portion in an approximately center area of the absorbent body;

said middle-height portion having opposing middle-height portion side edge steps and a constant middle-height portion thickness extending from one of said opposing middle-height portion side edge steps to another one of said opposing middle-height portion side edge steps;

said standard-height portion extending beyond both said opposing middle-height portion side edge steps to said opposing outer absorbent body edges, said standard-height portion having a constant standard-height portion thickness extending from one of said opposing outer absorbent body edges to another one of said opposing outer absorbent body edges;

leakage preventing grooves, extending in said longitudinal direction of the absorbent article which is orthogonal to a lateral direction extending between said opposing outer absorbent body edges, said leakage preventing grooves being provided in the area of the middle-height portion of the absorbent body with

opposing side walls of said grooves being formed in said middle-height portion such that depths of said opposing side walls of said leakage preventing grooves are equal on opposing sides of said leakage preventing grooves; and

said leakage preventing grooves extending longitudinally at positions proximate said opposing middle-height portion side edge steps of the middle-height portion, respectively.

2. (Currently Amended) The absorbent article according to claim 1, wherein the leakage preventing grooves are deeper than said constant middle-height portion thickness and extend into the standard-height portion of the absorbent body.

3. (Currently Amended) The absorbent article according to claim 2, wherein a thinned portion of absorbent material is provided extending outward from said opposing middle-height portion side edge steps of the middle-height portion, said thinned portion have a thinned portion thickness less than said constant middle-height portion thickness.

4. (Currently Amended) The absorbent article according to claim 1, wherein the middle-height portion extends to first and second middle-height portion longitudinal ends and said absorbent body extends beyond said first and second middle-height portion longitudinal ends, and front and rear folds, folding the absorbent article in three into a packaging configuration, extend in said lateral direction and are respectively disposed in the standard-height portion beyond said first and second middle-height portion longitudinal ends.

5. (Currently Amended) The absorbent article according to claim 2, wherein a thickness of the standard-height portion absorbent body is 1 to 3 mm.

6. (New) The absorbent article according to claim 5 wherein said constant middle-height portion thickness is in thc range of 1.5 to 8.0 mm.

7. (New) The absorbent article according to claim 6 wherein said leakage preventing grooves are formed in said absorbent article to have a groove depth H extending from said front sheet to a groove bottom, and said groove depth H is in the range of 0.5 to 9.0 mm.

8. (New) The absorbent article according to claim 7 wherein said leakage preventing grooves are formed in said absorbent article to have a groove depth H, and a ratio of said groove depth H to said constant standard-height portion thickness is in the range of 0.06 to 3.3.

9. (New) The absorbent article according to claim 8 wherein said leakage preventing grooves have a bottom width B in the range of 0.5 to 5.0 mm.

10. (New) The absorbent article according to claim 5 wherein said constant middle-height portion thickness is in the range of 2.0 to 4.0 mm.

11. (New) The absorbent article according to claim 10 wherein said leakage preventing grooves are formed in said absorbent article to have a groove depth H extending from said front sheet to a groove bottom, and said groove depth H is in the range of 2.0 to 6.0 mm.

12. (New) The absorbent article according to claim 11 wherein said leakage preventing grooves are formed in said absorbent article to have a groove depth H, and

a ratio of said groove depth H to said constant standard-height portion thickness is in the range of 0.2 to 0.8.

13. (New) The absorbent article according to claim 1, wherein a thickness of the standard-height portion absorbent body is 1 to 3 mm.

14. (New) The absorbent article according to claim 13 wherein said constant middle-height portion thickness is in the range of 1.5 to 8.0 mm.

15. (New) The absorbent article according to claim 14 wherein said leakage preventing grooves are formed in said absorbent article to have a groove depth H extending from said front sheet to a groove bottom, and said groove depth H is in the range of 0.5 to 9.0 mm.

16. (New) The absorbent article according to claim 15 wherein said leakage preventing grooves are formed in said absorbent article to have a groove depth H, and a ratio of said groove depth H to said constant standard-height portion thickness is in the range of 0.06 to 3.3.

17. (New) The absorbent article according to claim 16 wherein said leakage preventing grooves have a bottom width B in the range of 0.5 to 5.0 mm.

18. (New) The absorbent article according to claim 13 wherein said constant middle-height portion thickness is in the range of 2.0 to 4.0 mm.

19. (New) The absorbent article according to claim 18 wherein said leakage preventing grooves are formed in said absorbent article to have a groove depth H

extending from said front sheet to a groove bottom, and said groove depth H is in the range of 2.0 to 6.0 mm.

20. (New) The absorbent article according to claim 19 wherein said leakage preventing grooves are formed in said absorbent article to have a groove depth H, and a ratio of said groove depth H to said constant standard-height portion thickness is in the range of 0.2 to 0.8.